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ABSTRACT

Designed for persons interested in using "A Manual for Investigating American English in the South: Field Procedures" as a tool rather than using the approach suggested in the manual, this guide provides a preliminary set of instructions for using the manual, including comments on appropriate fieldwork orientation. Section II outlines the responsibilities of: (1) individual field workers, and (2) a suggested "resident director" or "administrative assistant" who would be responsible for providing orientation to the goals and research design of the project. Section III describes procedures for setting up interviews and provides guidelines for preparing all equipment and the speaking manual prior to arriving at someone's home for an interview plus general principles governing conduct during the "Part I, Conversation" section in the manual. Instructions are included in this section for final steps of the interview: classifying and making tapes and questionnaires; securing a release form, and completing the data sheet. Contains 14 references. (NH)

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A MANUAL FOR INVESTIGATING AMERICAN ENGLISH IN THE SOUTH: FIELD PROCEDURES

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As the Interview Manual for the Arkansas Language Survey was being written, preliminary fieldwork was carried out both to train potential fieldworkers and to pre-test various versions of the format and content of the questionnaire.[1] It was thus possible for the director and the graduate students who conducted the pilot interviews to study the tape recordings of those interviews and to make appropriate changes, some of which resulted in considerable modification of the original research design. Additionally, much was learned from the pilot interviews about strategies to employ, particularly in the conversational part of the interview. As the questionnaire was modified, these strategies were kept constantly in mind, so that many of the field procedures appropriate for use with the questionnaire are implicit in its construction. Others, however, must be specified. In its final form, which Gary Underwood and I expect to appear in a book entitled A Manual for Investigating American English in the South, the Interview Manual will be directed at an audience including professional

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researchers and teachers, students (especially graduate students), and lay persons or teachers interested in language study techniques. We are designing the book to be of use both to people interested in the approach suggested by the Manual and also to those interested in making use of the Manual as a tool, just as it is. It is to the latter group, in particular, that these remarks are addressed. They constitute, in fact, a preliminary set of instructions for using the Manual, including comments on appropriate fieldworker orientation.

II

Any survey using this Manual should rely on a resident director or an administrative assistant to handle the overall arrangements. Individual fieldworkers can handle small areas, such as counties, but should have constant access to some person who can make final decisions about questionable matters. However, the director's most important responsibility will be to provide orientation to the goals and research design of the project. This can be done in a variety of ways, depending upon the exact nature of the project, of course. Initial interviewing for the Arkansas Language Survey was done in what would probably be a typical situation. Four graduate students at the University of Arkansas enrolled in English 416V, Field Study: Dialects, a course taught by the project director, Gary Underwood. These students had all had basic courses in English linguistics (i.e., the history and structure of English); two had had additional training in folklore, and one had had a

fairly extensive language background, including courses in American English and Afro-American English. During the first part of the course, the students read materials designed to familiarize them with the theory and methodology of dialectology. In a continuation of the intensive instructional period, the interviewers were acquainted with the goals and research design of the Arkansas Language Survey.[2] Finally, instruction in interview techniques was given. This ended the intensive period of instruction. After this, students conducted practice interviews for critical evaluation prior to their embarking on actual interviewing for the survey. During the remainder of the course time students did individual interviewing, in teams of two and three when possible. This arrangement could easily be adapted to a situation in which fieldworkers were not taking a course; it could also be adapted for use in a situation in which one person is responsible for all the work, including the fieldwork. One advantage of the research design is that fieldwork can be done by relatively untrained persons.

Whatever the exact arrangement, the director of a survey similar to the one carried out in Arkansas has to begin by making some decisions about sampling procedures. The modified random sampling technique employed in Arkansas was decided upon partly in recognition of the fact that there were virtually no sociological studies of the state to draw upon for useful

[2]The research design of the project has been discussed in some detail in papers and articles; see Underwood 1972 and 1975 and Dumas 1973.

data about the population of Arkansas. It was felt that one goal of that language survey had to be partly sociological in that it had to draw a sample of native-born Arkansawyers that would be fully representative of the entire population. In areas where more sociological information about a given population is available, it might be appropriate to use some other sampling procedure. If representative parts of an area are selected (as they were in Arkansas, in the form of nine counties), there remains one other sampling problem, that of selecting the individuals to be interviewed. On this question the fieldwork carried out in Arkansas suggests strongly that the modification of the research design of the Arkansas Language Survey to avoid judgment samples was a sound decision. The procedure used in Arkansas, based upon one used in the Detroit Dialect Study (Shuy, Wolfram, and Riley 1968:5-8), insures three generations of speakers in the study and has advantages which appear to outweigh the major limitation, the bias against a portion of the adult population. The samples are obtained in the following way: In each county a total is obtained of all children enrolled in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades in the schools of the county, and 24 names are chosen at random. This is done by dividing the total number of students in these three grades by 24 to obtain n. Then, each nth name is taken from the alphabetical rosters. From this list of 24 children, ultimately four children and two older members of each of their families are interviewed. The approach is to contact each sixth family on the list to obtain

an interview. If the family is for any reason not available for interviewing, or if it is not native to the region, the next family on the list is contacted. This process continues until the twelve interviews have been obtained.

Finally, anyone directing such a survey must make a decision about how to determine the social stratification of the sample. A number of possibilities exist; the decision-making process in Arkansas involved an examination of three procedures, those of Warner, Social class in America (used by Pedersen [1975] in his study of Chicago English; Michael, The construction of the social class index (used by Labov [1966] in his New York study); and Hollingshead, Social class and mental illness (used by the Detroit Dialect Study). Consideration was given to the question raised by Macauley in his review of Wolfram (1969) about objective criteria for social classification (1970:767-769). Upon the recommendation of sociologists at the University of Arkansas, it was decided to retain the subjective classification of speakers. Whatever one decides about the method of classifying to be used, one should designate classes by a simple number or letter code.

III

In order to describe the procedures for setting up interviews I shall assume a hypothetical project using the same sampling procedures as those of the Arkansas Language Survey. I shall further assume that the project involves a survey of fixed regions, such as counties. The first step is to obtain

a list of all the schools, public and private, in the county. There are various sources of information about the names of the schools; in Arkansas, these are published conveniently in the occasional Arkansas almanac (we used the 1970 edition), issued at irregular intervals by a private firm in Little Rock. Private schools present more of a problem, particularly if they are white flight schools in racially tense areas. Very often a county superintendent will provide a list of all schools in the county. The next step is to obtain a total of all children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades in the schools of the county. This is done by writing to the superintendents of each of the school districts and administrative heads of any private schools, requesting the number of pupils enrolled in each of those grades. A form letter should be prepared and a self-addressed postal card should be included for use by the respondent. If a response is not forthcoming within ten days, a second letter should be mailed, worded much like the first. A second postal card should be included in the follow-up letter. Should the second letter fail to elicit a response, one should telephone the superintendent's office. All letters and telephone calls should be addressed to superintendents and other administrative heads by name, if at all possible. Again, these are frequently available in state almanacs and other sources of information.

The next step is to obtain the number n for the county. This is done by dividing the number 24 into the total number of pupils in the three grades. Suppose that the total number

of pupils is 1097, as it was in one county in Arkansas; then $\underline{n} = 45$. That means that the sample for the county will consist of every 45th name from the rosters of the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades of all the schools of the county. In preparing to draw the sample, one should work according to some predetermined scheme for arranging the schools, either in order of size, or alphabetically, or in order of response. Here's how the 24 numbers were arranged for Hot Spring County, Arkansas. There were five school districts in the county, a large consolidated one in Malvern, the county seat, and four smaller ones in other towns. I listed the schools in order of response, and the total figures of fourth, fifth, and sixth graders looked like this:

Malvern	782
Glen Rose	211
Magnet Cove	129
Ouchita	110
Bismarck	142
Total	1374

When I divided the number 24 into 1374 I got the figure 55; therefore, I took every 55th name as it appeared on the roster. But before I could actually collect the names, I still had one other job to do; that was to figure out how many names I wanted from each school, and in what order I wanted them in terms of the schools roster. Going through the list of schools, again in the order of response, and noting the locations of the numbers, I came up with a list telling me I needed names—

from the various schools as follows:

Malvern	55
	110
	165
	220
	275
	330
	385
	440
	495
	550
	605
	660
	715
Glen Rose	33
	69
	102
	135
	168
Magnet Cove	12
	67
Ouchita	48
	103
Bismarck	48
	103

I knew that in the Malvern School District there were three elementary schools, so I also had to arrive at a list of how

many names I wanted from each individual school, and in what order I wanted them in terms of the school rosters. Again going through the lists of schools in the order of response, I came up with a list telling me that I needed names from the three schools as follows:

Pratt	55
	110
	165
Smith	16
	71
	126
	181
Fields	30
	85
	140
	195
	250
	305

Finally, I was in a position to drive to the county to obtain the names for the initial sample. Initially, the procedure was for the fieldworker to obtain all names in person, asking for only two pieces of additional information, the names and mailing addresses of the parents or guardians. In this county, as in others, various problems arose. It was these problems, in fact, that led to my abandoning the notion that it was essential for the fieldworker to obtain the names in person. At one school in this county, Glen Rose, I arrived

just as thunderstorms and tornadoes were threatening. The secretary quickly informed me that school was about to be closed for the day. Since I had driven to Hot Spring County planning to collect all the names in one day, and since it was not certain the school would re-open the next morning, I was reluctant to leave without the names. The secretary suggested that she mail them to me. I agreed to this procedure and explained to her exactly how to select the names. Several days later I received the list of names together with a note saying that the school had indeed been closed for several days because of storms and flooding. This was one of several experiences which led me to make a modification in field methodology. Our initial intention had been that a field-worker would collect all names in person. But in four schools, Glen Rose, mentioned above, Reed Middle School in Desha County, Heber Springs School in Cleburne County, and Piggott School in Clay County, I was forced to rely on someone else's secretarial services. It was the experience in Desha County, and my musing upon the apparent predictability of the situation there, that of a large consolidated school where no one had time to sit down and show me the records, but where someone offered to compile the lsit for me, that led me to wonder whether it might not be possible to gather the remaining names by mail, saving myself the time and expense involved in driving all over the state to gather the names for the sample. Earlier in the year (the work in Desha County began after I had been interviewing for several months), I would have hesitated to

attempt such a procedure, partly because I would have felt that to do so would be to impose upon school administrators who were already too busy with one thing or another (I recall that deer season interfered with the cooperation of at least two school superintendents in Cleburne County) and partly because I would have felt that such a procedure would introduce a potential source of error into the research design of the project. How would I know, I had to ask myself, whether an image-conscious administrator had not simply skipped over names of pupils he or she did not want thought representative of the school population of that community? How could I be certain that the list I received was not loaded with the names of persons an administrator wanted to see represent the school and the community? But my experience increasingly convinced me that I had little control over that in any case. So I decided that I would attempt to gather all remaining names by mail. I tried the modified method first in Bradley and Hempstead Counties. I hesitated longer in the case of St. Francis County, because I suspected that the unusually high levels of racial tension I knew to exist there might be a deterrent to our project more easily overcome in person than by mail. But the responses came more quickly from St. Francis County than elsewhere. Of particular interest to me was the response from Forrest City, the county seat and largest town in the upper black belt delta of Arkansas, for here the new method was enormously successful. In response to my first letter I received an enormous package which turned out to contain photocopies of all the class rosters of the fourth,

fifth and sixth grades in the Forrest City schools. All I had to do was to count through the rosters, then let the appropriate official know which names were in my sample. My tentative conclusion after this experience is that while it is probably always preferable to collect names in person, collecting them by mail is a viable alternative, particularly where time and money are short, or where gasoline is expensive. I suspect the technique would always work better in rural areas than in urban areas, simply because there is a strong tradition of doing things by mail. (This question is explored in more detail in Dumas 1973.)

Once one has the twenty-four names for the initial sample, the next step is to contact the families. A letter is sent out to each of the twenty-four families on the list, telling them very briefly what the survey is about and that they may be contacted within the next few weeks to explore the possibility of their participating in the survey. Our experience in Arkansas was quite different from that reported for the Detroit Dialect Survey, where the administrative assistant who went to the homes to schedule the interviews was always preceded by a letter, but not always expected in spite of that letter. We found the letter to be crucial and to open doors quickly and easily in most cases. Only once did I have a family respond negatively to the letter; one couple in Cleburne County wrote me a letter, the text of which read, in its entirety, thus: "We do not wish to participate in your Language Survey program so you can have your representative not call on us." But generally people responded positively.

The final step then prior to interviewing is the scheduling of the interviews. Persuading people to be interviewed is a complex art, the details of which are far beyond the scope of this paper. Let me just mention two kinds of problems we encountered that seem unique to a survey involving both random sampling and a study of three generations. In the early stages of the interviewing a family in Carroll County presented difficulties because the older adult who had been expected to cooperate refused to let herself be interviewed. In our sampling technique we assume that the younger adult will help us secure the cooperation of the older adult. It is probably a good idea always to have that younger adult talk to the older adult who will be interviewed prior to scheduling any of the interviews. Otherwise, one runs the risk of being unable to complete a family. Children can also present difficulties. More than once in the interviews in Arkansas, fieldworkers found themselves in an interviewing situation with children who appeared to have some sort of speech problems which should have made them unsuitable for the survey. In response to this situation, I suggested another modification in methodology, that the family rather than the child be made the target. This procedure has economic advantages, for if a second child in the family already contacted makes a preferable informant, one does not have to abandon a contact already established to seek a new family. One should if at all possible see and talk to the child before the family interviews are set up. If the fieldworker is securing names for the sample directly

from the schools in person, he or she can usually arrange to see the children there. School personnel in general we found to be very helpful, giving directions to people's houses, informing fieldworkers which families were not native to the area, and so on. Another potential source of help if one encounters problems securing cooperation from potential informants is local ministers. They are highly recommended both by researchers and local people. The late Melvin Butler was the first to point out to me how helpful it might be to contact local black ministers in south Arkansas for help in securing the cooperation of black informants. And a school official in Carroll County, trying to help student fieldworkers there with the family I mentioned earlier, suggested that a local minister might have been able to help. But these are things that have to be played by ear. I should stress, too, that in all our dealings with potential informants and with informants, we are totally honest in describing both the purposes of the survey and the rationale behind each section of the questionnaire. We do not, for instance, pretend that we are interested in vocabulary items in Section II. A. of the questionnaire. We make it very clear to the informant, in the directions, that we want to hear the informant say certain works. I did find that one strategy devised by Gary Underwood was extremely useful. That was the carrying of a general highway map of the county. These maps are extremely detailed and with them it is possible to pinpoint and mark exact locations of rural homes in a way that would be impossible otherwise.

IV

Prior to arriving at someone's home for an interview, the fieldworker should carefully prepare all equipment and the speaker's manual for immediate use. This means that all sheets will have been placed in the speaker's manual, that the subjective response sheets which are used at the conclusion of the interview will have been numbered, that a blank tape will have been placed on the tape recorder ready for immediate use, and that all equipment will have been checked to see that it is in satisfactory operating order. Upon arriving, one should set up the equipment quickly and matter-of-factly, making certain that the interview is being held in a location free of machinery or other noise.

The general principles governing one's conduct during Part I, Conversation, are that one should let the informant speak as much as possible, one should strive for relaxed passages of connected discourse, and one should remember that one of the purposes for which this section was designed was to put the informant as much at ease as possible. The questions provided are useful guides, but should in no circumstances be adhered to slavishly. The experienced fieldworker will quickly learn the questions so that he or she does not have to use the manual during this part of the interview. With very talkative informants one will need to use very few of the questions; with others, and with many children, one may make use of every question in the manual and still have time left over. This part of the interview should run about 30 minutes,

but it is better to cut it a bit short or to extend it a bit rather than to make an unusually quiet informant uncomfortable or to break into the middle of a story. Sometimes additional conversation can be elicited toward the conclusion of the taped portion of the interview. Some of the questions in this section will have to be rewritten for use outside Arkansas, particularly in Subsection E, The Region. A knowledge of the area being studied as well as some local history will be invaluable in writing questions for any area.

Section II, Elicited Responses, is usually the most difficult section for the interviewer first using the manual. Section A, Illustrations, takes quite a long time to get through initially. However, with practice it becomes very easy to administer and goes very quickly with most informants. The Directions printed in this section should be read aloud to the informant, as should those of every section. With each of the drawings there are certain questions that may be asked if the drawing itself does not elicit the desired response. These will be included as suggestions in the Manual. The number of illustrations makes it impossible for me to discuss the drawings in detail here. In general, however, the principle in this section is to remember not to make the informant uncomfortable. It is better to miss an item than to make the informant feel that he or she has somehow "failed." Difficult items are provided for in more than one place, so that, for instance, if one fails to elicit the word "bottle" in connection with the drawing of Skrip's ink, one has a chance to elicit it

on the next page in connection with a bottle on which are drawn a skull and crossbones.

Subsection B, Opposites, is very easy to administer and goes very quickly with all informants. The only word of caution I offer here is to call attention to the fact that the interviewer's dialect may interfere with the rapidity of response on one or two items. These are the words spelled "o-n" and "o-f-f," designed to elicit the words spelled "o-f-f" and "o-n," respectively. But by the time this part of the interview has been reached, the interviewer should know how the informant pronounces those words and should match his or her pronunciation to that of the informant.

Subsection C, is self-explanatory and, again, goes very quickly. The next subsection, Places, is optional and should be used only if the interview is running 5 to 10 minutes ahead of schedule. As it appears in the manual, it is written almost exclusively for use by inhabitants of the state of Arkansas. Other researchers wanting to include such a section for use in another part of the country should rewrite most of it, using the questions in the manual as a guide for the writing of their own. Subsection D, Miscellaneous Direct Questions, contains such items as -ing verb forms, noun plurals, etc., more words that are almost impossible to elicit with the aid of drawings.

Subsection E, Recitations, is slightly different from the rest of Section II in that it elicits numbers, letters, and names of days and months. In administering this section the

fieldworker must be certain that the informant keeps to a pace which involves a brief pause after each item. All of Section II should be completed in about 40 minutes.

Section III, Reading, is divided into three parts, the first of which is a simple test designed to tell the interviewer whether the informant can read. Normally, the interviewer will know by this stage of the interview, anyway. If the informant does not read, the second and third parts of the reading section will not, of course, be administered. The directions for the first part of the Reading Section are crucial; the informant must be told to turn the page and read the names of the days of the week. When the informant turns the page as instructed, he or she will see the names of the days of the week beginning with Tuesday. Presumably a person who cannot read will be able to save face by reciting the names of the days of the week beginning ordinarily with Sunday or Monday. If one gets that response, one can be certain that the informant is not reading. This device was originated by Labov (1965) and it appears in the Questionnaire for the Detroit Dialect Study, though its use there is not explained. The reading passage, Life on an Arkansas Farm, was written specifically for use in Arkansas, and anyone replicating the study should if at all possible write a reading passage for the area under study. Finally, in Subsection C there is a list of minimal pairs which the informant is asked to read, pausing between words in an item.

The final section, IV, is devoted to an investigation of

Linguistic Norms. Only one part of this is recorded, Subsection A, Linguistic Self Appraisal, in which the informant is asked direct, specific questions about his or her attitudes toward the speech of him/herself and of others. In my experience informants answer these questions very honestly; they should be asked seriously and probingly.

At this point the taped portion of the interview has normally been completed. If, however, there is time remaining on the tape, and if less than 30 minutes conversation has been elicited earlier, one should make an effort to get a few more minutes of conversation at this point. The questions provided in IV, A will probably be sufficient for generating further conversation, if the interviewer chooses to use them for that purpose. Otherwise the tape should be rolled to the end, then taken off the machine.

In the last three subsections, a tape is played for the informant, who is asked to (1) identify correct pronunciations, (2) identify his/her own pronunciations, and (3) record subjective reactions on a semantic differential scale to recordings of ten speakers. During this part of the interview the fieldworker should be careful to sit where he or she can observe the markings made by the informant so that any errors in methods of marking can be caught immediately.

The tapes used in the Arkansas Language Survey will not be made available for general use. Detailed instructions for preparing tapes will be included in the manual, and other researchers should plan to prepare their own tapes. Since it

is important that local specimens of speech be included among the ten speakers, it is not possible to prepare a tape for general use even within the Southern American states.

The last steps of the interview include asking the informant to sign the release form, being certain to sign it oneself, and completing the data sheet.

After the fieldworker leaves the informant's home, he or she should classify and mark the tapes and questionnaires collected there. Additionally, the fieldworker should listen to each tape in its entirety, making certain that the tape is complete and of good quality.

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